(b) Under the New Branch Licensing Policy, opening of branches of Public Sector Banks is a continuous process. As such, it is not possible to indicate the number of branches of Public Sector Banks to be opened during 1991-92 in Maharashtra. However, 54 licences are pending with commercial banks including Regional Rural Banks as on 8-7-91. Of these, the validity period of 33 licences issued for Rural/Semi-Urban centres under the Branch Licensing Policy for 1985-90/Service Area Approach for rural lending, has been extended upto 31st March, 1992.

Support Price for Rubber

30. SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to review the support price fixed for rubber in view of the increased cost of cultivation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The Bench Mark price of RMA IV grade of natural rubber was last revised and fixed at Rs. 21,450 per Tonne with effect from 15th January, 1991 after taking into account the increased cost of cultivation. As such there is no immediate proposal to revise the Bench Mark Price for natural rubber.

Development of Inland Waterways in Kerala

31. SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the total amount spent on the development of inland waterways in Kerala under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes;

(b) whether the funds allocated have been completely spent; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) to (c) The Central Government meets 50 percent of the sanctioned cost of the Centrally Sponsored IWT Schemes as loan assistance. Presently, two schemes namely, improvement of Udyogmandal Canal costing Rs. 189.80 lakhs and improvement of Champakara Canal costing Rs. 155.25 lakhs are being executed by the Government of Kelara as Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The entire Central share of Rs. 172.525 lakhs in respect of these two schemes has been reimbursed to the Government of Kerala.

Import of Coconut Oil

32. SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to import coconut oil during the current financial year; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) At present there is no proposal to import coconut oil during 1991-92.

(b) Does not arise.

Introduction of New Rifle for Army

33. SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to introduce any new rifle for the Army; and

(b) if so, the merits of the new rifle?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) A new 5.56 mm Rifle which is shorter in length, lighter in weight and has a higher fire power is proposed to be inducted into the Army.